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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: October 11, 2000 LARSON DISTURBED BY ABSENCE OF HATE CRIMES LANGUAGE IN AUTHORIZATION BILL

WASHINGTON, D.C.-- U.S. Congressman John B. Larson (CT-01) expressed his dismay this afternoon that the Conference Report filed in the House late Friday night for HR 4205, the National Defense Authorization Act for fiscal year 2001, did not include language attached in the Senate by Senator Edward Kennedy (D-MA) that would have expanded federal hate crimes laws. Senator Kennedy's amendment was accepted in the Senate on June 20, 2000 by a vote of 57-42, and the House voted 232-192 to instruct its Conferees to accept the Kennedy hate crimes provisions on September 13, 2000. However, despite these votes by both houses, the measure was excluded from the Conference Report, which passed the House today.

"This is an excellent example of common-sense legislation designed to protect the rights and lives of people who are specific targets of certain crimes, and I am disappointed that it was not included in the final Conference Report," said Larson. "I know that there are members on both sides of the aisle who agree that whenever the life or liberty of any minority group in the United States is threatened, the law is their best hope for protection and justice, and that is what we sought to strengthen in this provision. I will continue to fight for this legislation that a clear majority of my colleagues, both Democrats and Republicans, believe in."

The provisions would have set criminal penalties for hate crimes including bodily injury, death, kidnapping, and sexual abuse of

people because of their sexual orientation. It also would have provided funding for grants to assist state and local governments address hate crime issues in their communities.

Larson is an original co-sponsor of HR 1082, the Hate Crimes Prevention Act, which is similar to the Kennedy amendment. Larson also voted in favor of the motion offered by Congressman John Conyers (D-MI) instructing House members on the Conference Committee to accept Sen. Kennedy's hate crimes provision in the final version of the Defense bill. Larson also voted against a motion intended to block the hate crimes provision from being considered. That motion failed by a vote of 196-227.

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